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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by ABANTU for Development, Association of African Women for Research and Development, Collectif Sénégalais des Africaines pour la Promotion de l'Education Relative à l'Environnement, Groupe Pivot: Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes, International Federation of Women Lawyers, and Servitas Cameroon, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

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Statement*

We, on behalf of African women organizations:

1. Considering article 26, paragraph 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulating that education is a fundamental right for all,

2. Considering also that United Nations Member States committed themselves to present education for all as Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals,

3. Considering moreover article 18, paragraph 3 of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights requesting all States to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to protect their rights as stipulated in international declarations and conventions,

4. Noting that article 12 of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights requests that States take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and ensure gender and access equality to education and training,

5. Noting moreover that article 12 of the Protocol strongly encourages African heads of State to promote girls' and women's education at all levels and disciplines and in particular in the fields of science and technology,

6. Appreciating the decision by African heads of State that 2010-2020 will be recognized as the African Women's Decade and the interest in women's and girls' education in the fight against discriminations and disparities in order to ensure a top grade education open to girls and women in Africa,

7. Appreciating also the fact that the declaration of African ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs on the occasion of the launch of the African Women's Decade put the emphasis on the development of national policies and laws in favour of education for all and women's literacy,

8. Satisfied that the recommendations and commitments of the third women's congress and the first congress for youth in science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, organized by the Council in Cairo in November 2010, focused on the setting-up of an observatory on women, sciences and technology in Africa and a club for young scientists aimed at promoting young talent, particularly girls,

9. Concerned that, despite existing conventions and legal instruments ratified by most African States and the heads of State solemn declaration on gender equality, discriminations against girls and women are still prevailing in education and particularly in scientific and technical subjects, and in literacy,

10. Observing that, despite efforts made in terms of girls' access to primary education by most African countries, education inherited from the colonizer is unsuited for countries' needs in terms of development and is also dependent on implemented macroeconomic policies,

* Issued without formal editing.

11. Convinced that no nation can develop if education and access to decent work for its population comprising a majority of girls and women is jettisoned,

12. Convinced moreover that the notion of "decent work" can only be understood if the dignity of girls and women is respected, that is to say an image-enhancing and rewarding work suitable to their family capacities and obligations and which provides a salary likely to help them have a decent life and meet their basic needs (food, housing, health, transport, education, etc.) and be materially, morally and culturally comfortable,

13. Convinced lastly that decent work must enable the working woman to combine family life and professional life and to have access to decision-making positions, jobs with responsibilities and command positions,

14. Determined to fight for girls' and women's access to all subjects and standards of education and training that will allow them to fulfil themselves in decent work,

15. Call upon the African Union to:

(a) Accelerate the ratification by all African States of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights to the Rights of Women;

(b) Institutionalize, through the African Union Commission on Sciences and Technology, an observatory on women, sciences and technology in Africa as part of the African Women's Decade;

(c) Create, through the African Union Commission on Sciences and Technology, within the youth pan-African club, a branch for scientists and including girls' participation;

(d) Watch over the effective implementation of laws on decent work;

(e) Put in place a continental radio and television channel and a newspaper to promote women's role in development, in partnership with civil society organizations;

(f) Help countries emerging from conflict situations to establish the fundamentals of sustainable education and strengthen their equality and peace culture machineries;

16. Call upon African States to take all appropriate measures in order to:

(a) Accelerate the implementation of article 12 of the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights to the Rights of Women;

(b) Extend all literacy plans for the benefit of women of all circles and ages;

(c) Develop the implementation of incentive measures to keep girls and women in higher education, such as community teaching and social infrastructures, as well as awarding of research training fellowships;

(d) Watch over the promotion of girls' and women's access to scientific and technical fields in order to reduce selective courses of study;

(e) Optimize scientific resources and endogenous knowledge in the continent's development process;

(f) Put in place community day nursery for children up to 12 months, for women to be at their peak in their professional and training activities;

(g) Change the curricula of African schools, to introduce a radical reform centred on the rebuilding of the cultural identity of male and female students, and linking the school to the community life;

17. Call upon UN-WOMEN to support research and advocacy activities in Africa aimed at:

(a) Putting in place programmes for strengthening women's and girls' participation in education and scientific and technical training;

(b) Reforming scientific and educational institutions to make them open to women and girls;

(c) Promoting gender analysis in the field of sciences and technologies, to ensure the full participation of women and girls;

18. Call upon development partners to support and promote programmes stemming from those recommendations.